

Wanderers present the TIE to remember

WYCOMBE v MIDDLESBROUGH



By JOHN OAKLEY

JOHN MASKELL, long-serving Wycombe Wanderers goalkeeper, admits to being superstitious.

So before playing against First Division Middlesbrough at Loakes Park in the F.A. Cup third round he was going through his usual double act for Cup-tie days.

That involved wearing his navy blue Berks and Bucks county tie.

Then he was planning to be second man in line when skipper Alan Phillips led the Wycombe Wanderers on to the pitch.

"I'm not sure why I do these things," admitted Big John. "But I'm sure I would play badly if I forgot. I like getting on to the pitch as early as possible to shake off any pre-match nerves."

Maskell, now 31, is in his 12th season with the Wanderers and agrees that F.A. Cup ties are just that bit special.

"I think all clubs like ours like to have a tilt at the big boys."

I think Middlesbrough are about the last team I wanted us to meet.

Some of the bigger clubs tend to mess about a little when they meet amateur or a non-League club.

They try to take the mickey instead of getting on with winning the game.

But Middlesbrough are not like that. They don't appear to have any stars. But when I have seen them on the box they all work like mad for each other.

HARDEST

That is the hardest type of team to beat and if we are realistic we don't have too much chance.

I know we have a sloping pitch which confuses many teams at first but Middlesbrough should be too long in the tooth to be confused for long.

But don't think I'm too pessimistic. I know a lot of things can happen in a Cup-tie. If Hendon can draw at Newcastle — remember last season? — then we have an outside chance.

"I guess I'm in the hot seat. Make a mistake and it's curtains. But I'm looking forward to this match."

These sort of occasions can really lift teams like ours and I know that all the lads will be giving everything.



ALAN PHILLIPS
He leads out Wycombe — followed immediately by John Maskell.



Yes, it's a "tie" to remember for Wycombe goalkeeper John Maskell and he forecasts that Middlesbrough won't be able to forget it for years and years. Maskell, in his 12th season with The Happy Wanderers, says the occasion is going to lift them.

Big Jack tells his lads 'Don't worry'



JIM PLATT, facing Wycombe.

MIDDLESBROUGH fans rate Jim Pratt the best uncapped goalkeeper in the First Division.

"And I'm not arguing with that opinion," says Middlesbrough manager Jack Charlton.

Big Jack believes Irishman Platt will win over the impartial, plus a few of the fervent Loakes Park regulars, this afternoon.

Charlton's pre-match pep talk will include a warning to his team: "Don't you worry about the slope—and let Jim be boss in the goal area."

Jack admits that he is doing the worrying and planning for his players on how to combat the notorious Loakes Park pitch with its 10 feet drop.

The slope is from touchline to touchline and different from the Yeovil gradient where many First Division teams have met their Cup doom.

Charlton knows plenty about cup-fighting, having been centre half in England's team that won the world Cup in 1966.



JACKIE CHARLTON, Middlesbrough manager